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**Marilyn:**

## AN UNTOLD STORY BY NORMAN ROSTEN

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**Marilyn:**  
***An Untold Story***

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by  
**NORMAN ROSTEN**



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California. 1962. Her last spring. She had then only a few more months of life.

To start again after a third marital failure would demand a colossal effort and control. She was back in Hollywood, the circle closing. Not a return in triumph but in default; she was back because she had nowhere else to go. One always goes home when the world cannot be won. She had moved to her new house—the small, never-to-be-completed house that she wanted so desperately to make into a permanent home. It was built in Mexican style: tiles, masks on the wall, assorted pottery, and a large Aztec calendar decorated the rooms. But they were cold, uncertain, incomplete rooms. White sheets covered the bedroom windows. Not much furniture, as though she were unsure of the house and its occupant. In the back, a small swimming pool, some lawn, and a few trees on perhaps an acre of land that fell away in a deep cut, affording a modest view. Far from the Beverly Hills splendor, but she liked the setting.

Alone again, she was feverishly optimistic. Yes,

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she looked forward to work, a new film, a resumption of her career. Did she hear the rumors that she was through? If so, she never referred to them. She talked about the future. Fate was now watching her, knowing just how much time was left, stepping around the garden, getting accustomed to the grounds, peering into the window of her bedroom where her lifeless body would soon be discovered. And I, listening to her, aware only of a controlled desperation. Ruth amid the alien corn. The land of the drive-in.

Several days after our arrival (my wife and I were in Hollywood on a film assignment), Marilyn phoned and excitedly announced, "It's Sunday, let's go to my analyst. I want you and Hedda to meet him. I told him and his wife that we're coming."

I hesitated. "Is that allowed?" (I never had an analyst.)

"He's a great person and has a wonderful family," she said, leaving my question unanswered. "You'll like them all and vice versa."

"What'll we do—talk about you?"

"It's OK. As long as I'm not listening. Phone you right back."

In a few minutes she reported that we were not only invited to his house but could stay on and listen to chamber music; we learned that her analyst played violin with an amateur quartet. "Chamber

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music!" she gayly exclaimed. "And it's not in a chamber, it's in a living room!" She was happy at the prospect of enjoying *chamber* music, elite music, the champagne of music.

Introductions at her analyst took on a touch of elegance, if that's the right word. I was not just a writer but her "poet friend," while Hedda was not only my wife but "a dear person, and they're happily married."

Our host, Dr. Ralph Gresson, and his family were gracious and wonderfully informal. Marilyn fitted in easily. One could sense her complete relaxation here, as though this were a second home (a warmer foster home, the thought flashed through my mind). The house was in Mexican style, and I realized that Marilyn was modeling her own house after this one. It was, in fact, a miniature, a replica of this one. "I am trying to grow up, Doctor," her actions seemed to be saying. "I think I can now move away, but I want some reminders of home." In a way, her attempt to build a replica of her doctor's home was a touching sign of affection as well as an indication of beginning independence.

Finally, after coffee and cake and idle Sunday chatter, the other musicians showed up. Soon a familiar Mozart string quartet danced upon the air. Marilyn's analyst, it can be mentioned, played with the passion of the dedicated amateur, and what was lost in a few dropped notes he more